

Colorado shooting renews father's anti-gun mission

Level 3 • Advanced

1 What do you know?

Decide whether these statements are true (T) or false (F). Then check your answers in the text.

1. The Columbine school massacre took place in 1999.
2. Mitt Romney is the Democratic candidate in the 2012 US presidential election.
3. Columbine is a suburb of New York City.
4. Twelve people were killed in the Denver cinema shooting.
5. The victims were watching the latest Batman film.
6. One hundred and fifty people died in the Columbine school massacre.

2 Key words

Complete the sentences using these key words from the text.

outspoken
amass

lethal
arsenal

endorse
grieve

draining
rampage

loophole
stunned

1. When people _____, they feel extremely sad because someone has died.
2. A _____ is uncontrolled behaviour that results in damage to property or even death.
3. To _____ something means to collect a lot of it over a period of time.
4. An _____ is a large collection of weapons and ammunition.
5. If something is _____, it is very dangerous and able to kill you.
6. An _____ person states their opinion honestly, even if other people do not like it.
7. A _____ is something that has been left out of a law that people can use to avoid obeying that law.
8. If you _____ someone, you express support for them in public.
9. If you are _____, you are very shocked or upset, especially so that you are unable to act normally.
10. If something is _____, it makes you feel very tired or weak.

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Colorado shooting renews anti-gun mission for Columbine victim's father

Paul Harris in Littleton, Colorado
22 July, 2012

- 1 Tom Mauser's shoes may look like an ordinary pair of sneakers. But they are not. They are the very pair his 15-year-old son Daniel was wearing when he died in the 1999 Columbine school massacre. But Mauser was not thinking about the shoes. He was just plain angry and his voice shook with emotion as he explained why neither President Barack Obama nor Republican challenger Mitt Romney had spoken out about stricter gun controls in the wake of the Aurora mass shooting.
- 2 "They cower at a call from the gun lobby," he said, standing in the middle of the Columbine memorial, which lies in a pleasant park in the Denver suburb of Littleton, just across town from the now grieving city of Aurora. "They are not as afraid of hearing from me as they are afraid of hearing from the gun lobby. Well, I am going to make them afraid of getting that phone call from me too."
- 3 For Mauser, the alleged rampage of suspect James Holmes, who is believed to have killed 12 and injured 58 people as he attacked a midnight screening of the latest Batman film, was a clear example of the gaping holes in America's gun regulations. As Holmes amassed a terrifying arsenal of four guns, 6,000 rounds of ammunition and sophisticated bulletproof armour, he does not appear to have broken a single law.
- 4 All his purchases, either via the internet or in person at a gun store, were legal. Even buying a sophisticated and lethal 100-bullet magazine for his semi-automatic assault rifle was by the book. That is something that drives Mauser almost to the brink of tears. "A hundred bullet drum? Really? What is the purpose of that being legal, and how does that make us a stronger nation?" he asked.
- 5 These are questions close to Mauser's heart. Daniel Mauser died in the shocking Columbine school killings, which saw 12 students, one teacher and the two shooters killed in an event that seemed to usher in a terrible new world of mass killings that regularly – but briefly – erupt across America's front pages. Yet that heartbreaking experience has driven

Mauser to become a passionate and outspoken advocate for tightening America's gun laws.

- 6 He helped close a loophole in Colorado, which made it harder to buy weapons at gun shows without a background check. He has endorsed the rare politicians who make gun controls part of their agenda and is a board member of Colorado Ceasefire, a gun control group. Yet Mauser knows that since 1999 – despite the awful weight of mass shootings like Columbine – he has been on the losing side of the debate with little prospect of that changing.
- 7 Instead, across America since 1999, gun controls have got progressively looser. "It has not got better; it has got worse. In America, we are much too attuned to punishment and not prevention. But once you have lost a loved one, punishment does not mean anything," he said. Yet in the wake of the Aurora killings there has still been little debate over tightening gun laws. Obama devoted his weekly radio address to the tragedy but did not mention the word *gun* once in his speech. Romney merely called for swift prosecution of the killer. Only New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who is an independent and a billionaire, spoke out forcefully in favour of having a national debate on the issue. But, so far, his call has largely fallen on deaf ears.
- 8 Even after long years of struggle, though, Mauser is still able to be stunned at the silence that greets each fresh disaster. "If America can't question having that amount of firepower available [to Holmes] then the gun control movement might as well give up," he said. Not that he ever intends to. Mauser is powerfully motivated by the memory of his son.
- 9 Though many parents might find it unimaginable to think what it feels like to wear the very shoes that a beloved son died in, Mauser uses them as a motivational tool when he speaks on gun control issues and a way of paying tribute to Daniel's tragically shortened life. "It is very draining. But it is what I have committed to do. It is how I honour my son. Parents should not have to walk in the shoes of a murdered child," he said.

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3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

1. Why does Tom Mauser wear his son's shoes?
 - a. because it is his way of paying tribute to his dead son
 - b. because he is angry with politicians, especially Obama and Romney
 - c. because he wants to protest against America's gun laws
2. Since the Columbine massacre ...
 - a. ... America's gun laws have been tightened.
 - b. ... America's gun laws have remained the same.
 - c. ... gun controls in America have become looser.
3. What has happened since the Aurora cinema shootings?
 - a. Most people have been talking about tightening the gun laws.
 - b. There has been little public debate about tightening the gun laws.
 - c. Many people have been calling for looser gun controls.
4. When he bought his guns, ammunition and body armour ...
 - a. ... James Holmes broke a number of laws.
 - b. ... James Holmes was behaving perfectly legally.
 - c. ... James Holmes was arrested by the FBI.

4 Find the word

Find the following words and expressions in the text.

1. a four-word expression meaning *happening after an event or as a result of it* (para 1)
2. a verb meaning *to move your body down and away from someone or something because you are frightened* (para 2)
3. a three-word expression meaning *correctly, following all the rules or systems for doing something in a strict way* (para 4)
4. a four-word expression meaning *the point of being about to start crying* (para 4)
5. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *to make a process or activity begin* (para 5)
6. an adjective meaning *familiar with something and able to deal with it in a sensitive way* (para 7)
7. a four-word expression meaning *to be completely ignored by people who hear it (a particular request or demand)* (para 7)
8. a two-word expression meaning *something that helps to make you determined to achieve something* (para 9)

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5 Verb + noun collocations

Match the verbs in the left-hand column with the nouns and noun phrases in the right-hand column.

- | | |
|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. close | a. a law |
| 2. amass | b. tribute to someone |
| 3. tighten | c. a debate |
| 4. endorse | d. a loophole |
| 5. have | e. a politician |
| 6. pay | f. weapons |

6 Word-building

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the words in brackets at the end of each sentence.

- Many parents would find it _____ to wear the shoes of a dead child. [IMAGINE]
- Mitt Romney has called for the swift _____ of the killer. [PROSECUTE]
- Tom Mauser uses his son's shoes as a _____ tool. [MOTIVATE]
- Michael Bloomberg spoke out _____ in favour of a national debate on the gun laws. [FORCE]
- Tom Mauser is _____ motivated by the memory of his dead son. [POWER]
- He is a _____ advocate of stricter gun laws. [PASSION]

7 Discussion

Would stricter gun controls have prevented someone like James Holmes from doing what he did? Why? Why not?

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KEY

1 What do you know?

1. T
2. F
3. F
4. T
5. T
6. F

5 Verb + noun collocations

1. d
2. f
3. a
4. e
5. c
6. b

2 Key words

1. grieve
2. rampage
3. amass
4. arsenal
5. lethal
6. outspoken
7. loophole
8. endorse
9. stunned
10. draining

6 Word-building

1. unimaginable
2. prosecution
3. motivational
4. forcefully
5. powerfully
6. passionate

3 Comprehension check

1. a
2. c
3. b
4. b

4 Find the word

1. in the wake of
2. cower
3. by the book
4. the brink of tears
5. usher in
6. attuned
7. fall on deaf ears
8. motivational tool